

**Department of Human Services
Office of Rehabilitation Services
State Rehabilitation Full Council**

Meeting Minutes May 11, 2010

9:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.

Crowne Plaza, 801 Greenwich Ave Warwick, RI 02886

Present from Council: Dr. Kate McCarthy-Barnett, Rocco Bruno, Stephen Brunero, Wheeler Clemmons, Kelley Conti, Domenic DiOrio, Dr. Mona Dorsinville-Phanor, Dr. Judith L. Drew, Joan Fino, Dorothy Furlong, Jeanne M. Giroux, Paul Harden, Micheal Hazard, Margaret Hoyer, Roger Andrew Iannetta, Anne LeClerc, Sandy Lupovitz, Jeffrey D. Machado, Vincent Rossi, Jane Slade, Juan Troncoso, Joan Vendetti, Mary E. Wambach, Herbert Weiss

Present from the VR Agency: Linda L. Deschenes, Laurie DiOrio, Roberta Greene-Whittemore, Kathleen Grygiel, Ronald Racine, Sharon DiPinto

Guest: Stephen DeTatto, Elizabeth Graves, Elisabeth Hubbard

1. Call to Order: The Chairperson, Kate McCarthy-Barnett, called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M. Introductions of membership and guests followed. Quorum was met.

2. Additions/Deletions to Agenda - There were none.

3. Approval of Minutes - The minutes from the March 9, 2010 meeting were unanimously approved.

4. Chair's Report - Kate McCarthy-Barnett

Today we reflect on our action plans of the past year, share our accomplishments, and strategize steps to move forward.

We continually applaud the work that the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) is doing and the partnership we have with them. And it is important to recognize that despite all the challenges we face, whether it is fiscal or personal, ORS continues to meet the Performance Goals. And it is such a pleasure to have a constructive partnership between the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and ORS, which helps us to accomplish our goals.

Our work continues to move ahead based on the State Plan, the Comprehensive Needs Assessment, and the priorities we set in committee structure. One of those unique aspects of our partnership is that on every one of our committees we have an ORS Liaison from their leadership team. This brings the key issues to the committee level where we have an opportunity to reflect on what the barriers are, some of the goals, and to really look to set our strategic plans and priorities for the upcoming year.

Highlights - Sub-committees

***Transportation committee did a survey and reviewed the barriers to employment and then pulled together key stakeholders in the community to talk about the issues and barriers; this work has come up through our priorities with ORS and is now making a huge impact in looking at transportation issues on the State level.**

***Employment committee had a successful program, Road to Compliance. Sandy Lupovitz, the Employment committee, and the Business Leadership Network had an excellent forum and a great opportunity to start discussion in areas of employment and for businesses to network. Again, this is a unique opportunity for the SRC to not just identify priorities but to move forward on them in the community.**

***State Plan, Policy & Quality Assurance committee is once again working hard to review the draft of the State Plan; which has gone out to all the members. They will be having the hearing on the Plan, which is another opportunity to come and listen to the feedback from the community because it is so important to get a better understanding of input for the upcoming year.**

***Nominating and Leadership Development committee has rolled out an interesting Speakers Program to look at community best practices and those organizations that are collaborating with ORS. This allows us to bring the two together and examine connections between ORS and the community. And with this program members of this Council**

and ORS will have the opportunity to select these speakers to highlight the work being done.

As we move forward with the day, I'd like you all to keep thinking about where we have been, the great accomplishments we have had, and the challenges that we still have to work on. When we break into the committees later, start to prioritize your plans for the upcoming year.

5. Office of Rehabilitation Services Director's Report - Stephen Brunero

Welcome everyone to this important event. We have a ninety five percent (95%) participation rate, which is a real testament to Kate McCarthy-Barnett's diligence and communication efforts. I want to also recognize the hard work of Ron Racine, Kat Grygiel, Laurie DiOrio, and Lynn Paola in concert with Nancy Baker's efforts to put this event together. We were not sure if we were going to be here today due to the restrictions on food and travel in the State, We had to put a Critical Request Expense Form in, had to have it signed by the Director, then it went to State Purchasing, and it came back just in time to have this event take place. We believe this is an important event; once a year it is nice to get together to talk about the good things happening and the challenges we face.

I would like to recognize Roberta Greene-Whittemore's promotion to Assistant Administrator of (VR). She used to work at the Disability

Law Center and has managed the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) Project and training grants for ORS.

National - When I was in Washington attending the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Conference I met with our Federal Oversight Team at the Department of Education where I got good and bad news. The bad, because of the budget cuts all over the country many states are not able to get state-match funds to capture the federal dollars for their VR Programs. Good news, in Rhode Island we have been able to get the state-match and the money turned back from other states is available to those that meet a need for it, and we do here in Rhode Island. So we are hopeful to get redistribution of the unused money for our State. But we are also running out of money in Rhode Island in our VR Program; the estimates from our fiscal office is that in the tenth or eleventh month of this year we will run out of funds.

I also had appointments set up to meet our Congressional Delegation and I had an interesting experience when meeting them. I had my first meeting of the day with Senator Jack Reed, but when I got to his office he was at a Senate Armed Forces Hearing and was running a bit late. I was asked to wait and then about twenty minutes later his aide said he would be able to step out of the hearing for a few minutes and he would like to see me. I had to go to a room right next to the hearing room to speak with him. He expressed his support and was knowledgeable about the VR Program. He is a very strong

proponent to keep money coming in for those with disabilities. After sometime he had to head to another meeting and he asked me to walk with him and we continued to talk. He said he wouldn't forget about our Program. I also met with Patrick Kennedy's aide. All of our Congressional Delegations are supporting us and I think we will continue to get Federal dollars, however, we will be fortunate if we continue to get the State dollars.

State - We have a two hundred twenty (220) million dollar deficit this fiscal year and an estimated four hundred and forty (440) million next year. Funding for State programs is in trouble; there may be around a ten (10%) percent cutback for each state agency. We are hopeful that we will continue to get the state-match so we can get the maximum federal dollars.

Personnel - We have gotten approval over the last forty five (45) days to get some positions filled, Roberta Greene Whittemore's promotion to Assistant Administrator (VR), Kerri Sorensen - Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I (SBVI) and Robert Pires - Rehabilitation Teacher (SBVI), and we have postings for the DDS Program. One of the downside of promotions is that it is very difficult to get a position approved because the State government is shrinking. So when we do get an approval it is because we have made a very compelling case. And even though some of our positions are one hundred (100%) percent federally funded, like DDS, or almost eighty (80%) percent as is VR, it is still hard to get those positions filled. Many positions that

are posted are filled from within the Agency leaving us a new vacancy to fill by going through the process again, and a lot of these vacancies are not being filled.

State Rehabilitation Council - I want to compliment you all, this SRC is one of the best in the country, and the best in New England in terms of participation and positive relationship with the VR Agency. David Sienko and Kate McCarthy-Barnett have been very instrumental in getting ORS staff involved in the committees. In other states the personnel stay away from this but I think it is very important that we are engaged in the committees. It is important we have multifaceted representation for us to really understand the needs of the disability community. We will be working on better training for new members this summer to keep the dynamic process of the Council's work moving forward. I think this is a top-notch SRC and want to thank you all for working so hard throughout the year to help us serve the community.

ORS is part of the Department of Human Services (DHS); DHS is part of the Office of Health and Human Services (OHHS). This is the consolidation of state agencies. There are five agencies in OHHS. Since I have become the Director of ORS I lost my Union Affiliation as of thirty two (32) years and because I am no longer in the Union they can ask me to participate more in OHHS activities, which includes DHS, Department of Health, and Department of Elderly Affairs etc.. My time is being pulled in different directions and due to the continued

shrinking of the State Government, there is less money for the services and it will continue to be a problem next year, and I want you all to be aware of this. I want to thank my team and this Council for their continued hard work as well as compliment the advocacy efforts of this Council, the Independent Living Centers, and the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. I think you have all done a marvelous job advocating for positions and dollars for ORS and the rights of the disabled.

6. Guest Speaker Program

I. Jeffrey D. Machado, President/CEO Goodwill Industries of RI

The mission of Goodwill Industries of Rhode Island is to provide training, education and other services which result in employment and expanded opportunities for people with disabilities and other barriers to employment in order to enhance their capacity for independent living, increased quality of life and work.

Brief History of Goodwill Industries - Goodwill Industries of Rhode Island is the first rehabilitation agency in America with roots stretching back in the Rhode Island community to 1863. At that time, the agency was established as the Irrepressible Society and its mission was to meet the needs of Civil War Veterans who had been disabled. Then in 1872 the mission broadened to perform general charitable work for the City of Providence. In the 1890's, in response

to the request of the people served, the agency was finding jobs for people instead of performing charitable acts of kindness. Then in 1929, the name changed to The Bureau of the Handicapped, occupational and therapeutic services were added to the offerings. In 1945 the name was changed again to Community Workshops and in 1977 to Vocational Resources reflecting the broad range of educational and vocational services available. By 1996 Vocational Resources became a local affiliate of Goodwill Industries International. Goodwill Industries of Rhode Island is now an autonomous agency that is part of an international movement, which is recognized as the largest service provider in the world to people with disabilities and other barriers. In 2013 the company will be 150 years old.

Today, Goodwill Industries of Rhode Island is a comprehensive education and employment center committed to serving the needs of persons with disabilities and other barriers to employment. Our focus over the years has shifted from internal (sheltered workshops models) to more external community focused. This occurred because the type of work being performed by our clients became cheaper to ship overseas or automate and the model became outdated for mainstreaming clients. Fortunately many of the businesses we partnered with have helped us transition our services and utilize SACs and CWEs.

Individuals Served

- > Individuals with physical or mental challenges**
- > People transitioning from welfare to work**
- > Folks whose primary language is Spanish and who also have an additional barrier**
- > Those who are deaf or hard of hearing**
- > People who are underemployed or unemployed**
- > Individuals who have had an injury resulting in the need for retraining or a career change**
- > High school students at risk for dropping out**

Programs and Services for Adults

- > Vocational Evaluation**
- > Community Assessments**
- > Personal and Professional Development**
- > Job seeking skills – traditional and emerging techniques**
- > Internships and Occupational Skills Training**
- > Job placement and Retention Services**
- > Education services for students with special needs**
- > E-Waste Training Program**
- > Adult Education**
- > English for Speakers of Other Languages**
- > Computer Training Program**

Referral Process

Upon referral there is a comprehensive ten (10) day evaluation that tests aptitude, likes, dislikes, and interests during the first five (5)

days. During the second five (5) days we do a SAC/Situational Assessment in the community and at the job-site. This second part lets us observe the client's abilities to work in the dynamic environment and examines their ability to do things such as get to work on time, occupational abilities, and social interactions.

Partnerships

One of our biggest assets is the partnership we have with businesses in Rhode Island, which allow us to give work exposure in areas that a client may have interests in. We recently received a three hundred (300) thousands dollar grant from Champlin to complete the expansion of our training facility and have been working closely with ORS, the Department of Education and the Department of Labor and Training (DLT) to forecast future job growth and needs.

We periodically meet with employers to see why they are hiring, and what issues they would like to address for future hiring. Out of these strategic meetings came our Learn to Earn Employment Program (LEEP). This programs teaches what we identify as "soft skills", resume, interviewing skills, proper attire, hygiene, and social interactions with peers on the job. We combine soft skills with technical skills. We get the employers input up front and then train our folks so they have a better chance of being hired. This program has expanded due to employer input; we now have LEEP for people who speak Spanish, and for those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Relationship with The Office of Rehabilitation Services

This partnership is one of our biggest assets. Not only is ORS our main funding stream but also our partnership with this agency over the years has helped to design and implement programs and services that lead to employment and a brighter future for thousands of Rhode Islanders.

Future For Our Youth

Today's youth face difficult challenges like a crumbling economy and a limited job market making transition programs more important than ever. Goodwill maintains Transitional Resources Programs with five (5) high schools throughout the State. These programs currently serve around one hundred and thirty (130) students and allow them to engage in vocational exposures and work experiences while remaining in their local schools for academics. Staff from Goodwill Industries provide the service in each school system and arrange for the work experience to occur in the community where the student resides.

The Transitional Resources Program

***Vocational Evaluation**

***Field Trips - introduce career interests**

***Work exposures in the business community - meeting with employers – understanding employer expectations**

***Community work assessments including new model of “work studies”**

***Travel Training**

***Job seeking skills curriculum - resume writing/ interviewing skills/ mock interviews/ job applications**

***Introductions to colleges and local youth groups – helping them transition from high school to college**

***A detailed report focused on the student's progress, as well as work attitudes and aptitudes**

Summer Work Preparation Program

The Summer Work Preparation Program is a seven (7) week paid work experience that occurs in the months of July and August. All referrals for this program come from ORS. Between eighty (80) and one hundred (100) students who would not be able to obtain and maintain a job independently are served through this program. They receive a stipends pay based on their attitude and punctuality. Our staff brings them to job sites and monitors them during the day. We have some clients that required more direct supervision, typically students who would not be able to obtain employment without this additional assistance. We utilize a three-tier (3) system based on supportive needs. This program helps students make better decisions regarding their vocational directions, it helps to develop independence and positive work behaviors, and it keeps them out of trouble during the summer.

Goodwill Industries and ORS have always worked well together and that is never more important then now. Steve Brunero, Ron Racine

and Kat Grygiel have a passion for their work, and together we always find a way to achieve our mutual intent of expanding opportunities for people with disabilities.

II. Kathleen Grygiel, Deputy Administrator Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

Continuing on the theme of Transitional Services, ORS has a long-standing tradition with the schools in Rhode Island. The foundation of that relationship comes from a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Education that provides the guidance in terms of how we work together. That foundation enables us to work in the schools and work with the five (5) Educational Collaboratives, as well as Goodwill, and netWORKri Centers. Without this partnership we could not so successfully help the student with disabilities to achieve employment after they graduate.

While the students are in school we are limited to what we can do but we can provide Vocational Evaluations, applications, and some work experiences, which is my favorite. The summer work experiences are critical to help students get practical knowledge of actually working and is a critical component in helping student reach employment or training for college.

When we received Stimulus funding from the RSA we decided that the summer work experience was something we wanted to enhance,

make it available to more people, and even target students with specific disabilities, which historically had been underserved. We created SWEEP, which stands for Summer Work, Exploration, and Experience Program. This program in some ways replicates the summer work program that Jeff Machado was referencing relating to Goodwill. It has a very strong component of experience in the real work world where you receive some compensation directly related to the work effort. In addition we want to build into the program components for transportation assessment and training so students will have exposure to the transportation options in their area.

The six (6) week program was piloted last this summer and we had seven (7) partners working with us to offer ninety nine (99) youths the opportunity to participate. Then we met in the fall with the key players and reviewed the details of the program to determine what worked and what needed to be changed. There was unanimous agreement that we would do this again; everyone felt it was a worthwhile program. There will be more to come as we develop this further, but we really want to approach it from a regional effort and have agencies collaborate so they are not duplicating or competing. We want to use the SWEEP model for all of our summer work experiences so we have recruited fifteen (15) of our partners to participate in this program this summer and we plan to serve about two hundred and fifty (250) students. Goodwill will be participating as one of the partners!

7. Committee Reports

Transportation - Dr. Judith L. Drew

***Last year we reviewed the Comprehensive Needs Assessment and added input regarding transportation questions to be added on the assessment and we would like to continue to contribute to that assessment.**

***After our survey was completed our primary focus became putting together a consortium of representatives from different agencies that fund transportation and agencies that utilize that funding. Out of this effort, the plan is to look at all the money being spent by non-profits, as well as the vehicles underutilized during the day, to transport people and supplement RIPTA's Flex and Fixed Route systems via the Hubs, to make connections for rides. We want to create a model in one part of the State to see if it can work.**

***Get feedback from employers and find out what the specific transportation barriers are to get people to employment.**

***Consumer-based business for setting up a driving program. Once we set up the model, we want to have a Maxi-taxi service to connect the spokes; some of those who are working in this system will be people who have disabilities with good driving records thus creating jobs.**

***We are going to try and recruit an add agency to roll this program out when it is ready. We will also recruit someone from the Department of Economic Development.**

***Updating the database for non-profit human service agencies. We wanted to partner with a school to get students to update the**

database but we have not been able to accomplish this. This is not really a primary focus, but it is a barrier to us being able to communicate and get more participation, and it should be something paid attention to at the State level. We might send this over to the Department of Economic Development.

Employment - Sandy Lupovitz

***Inter agency coordination and cooperation by statewide agencies and committees that concentrate on generating and developing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.**

***Continue to communication with federal and state government agencies responsible for overseeing compliance by employers with regulations relative to the hiring of applicants and policies for active employees. We had the successful Road to Compliance event in February focused on increasing education and assistance aimed at reducing the incidence of violations so that more employers, reluctant to do so now, would consider employing people with disabilities.**

***Develop programs and/or Business Advisory Council designed to attract more employers to take an active interest in the work of the SRC and other agencies committed to increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.**

State Plan, Policy & Quality Assurance - Joan Fino

- *Advise ORS regarding its proposed policy revision.**
- *Advise ORS on the State Plan updates.**
- *Develop a continuous Quality Improvement Plan.**
- *Advise ORS regarding changing its Order of Selection criteria.**

Nomination and Leadership Development - Laurie DiOrio

- *Implement newly designed format/forms and process for membership nominations and Guest Speaker Program. sustained by direct participation of membership in the process.**
- *Continue collaboration with ORS for solicitation of internal and external guest speakers.**
- *Cross committee collaboration - facilitate relationships with like committees and agencies with similar goals - such as the IL network etc.**
- *SRC members will continue to canvass community for nominee participants/members of minority group representation: African American, Hispanic and Native American.**
- *Collaborate with Paul Harden (RI EconDev) to capitalize on and solicit relationships with minority owned businesses.**
- *Membership: Members whose first term is ending need to be contacted for decision of reappointment to second term.**
- *Non-active members: (re- bylaws) suggest they should be contacted and under leadership of the Chair, determine status to continue or remove in order to facilitate replacement with more active members.**
- *Reinstitute a training and orientation program for new SRC members**

8. Public Comments - There were none.

9. Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy L. Baker, Staff

State Rehabilitation Council